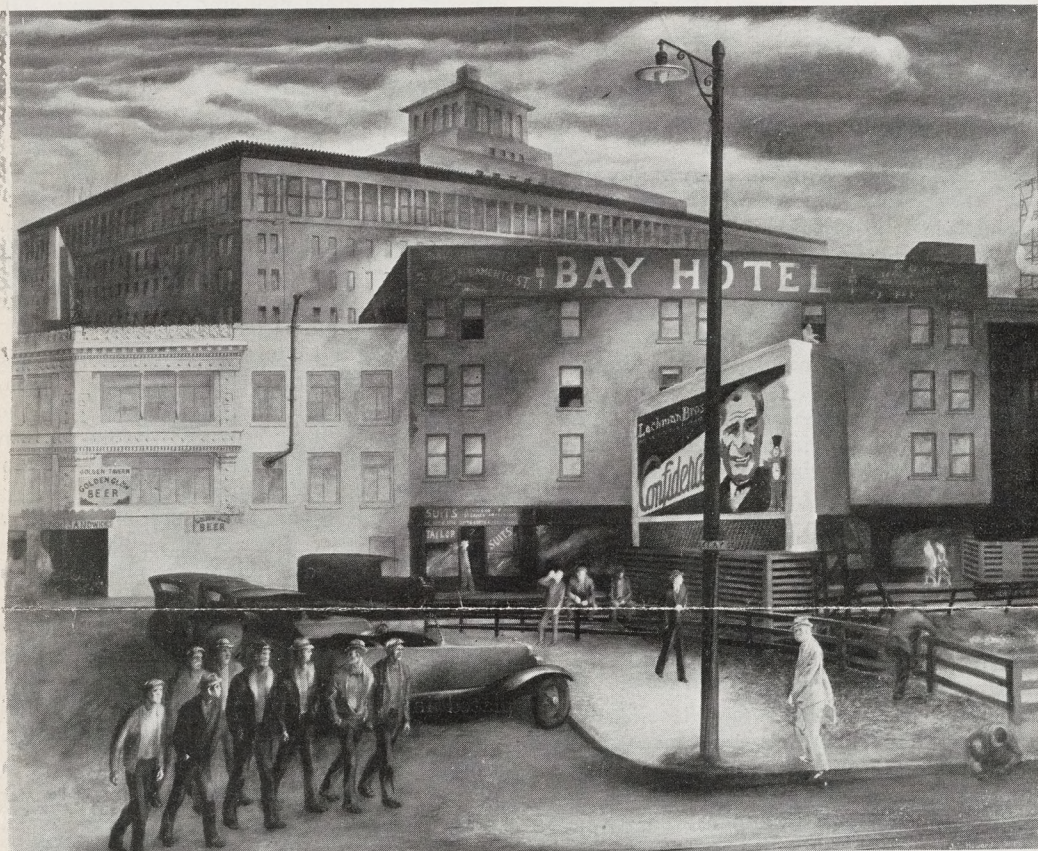


# SAN FRANCISCO ART ASSOCIATION BULLETIN

OL. 2

APRIL, 1936

No. 11



EMBARCADERO AND CLAY STREETS, by John Howard  
Awarded First Anne Bremer Memorial Prize, San Francisco Art Association Annual, 1936.

## Propagandizing Art

By PROF. STEPHEN C. PEPPER, University of California

[S ANYTHING the matter with propaganda in art? I do not mean, Does art hurt propaganda?, but, Does propaganda hurt art? Many of us have a feeling that it does. But have we ever traced that feeling to its roots?

There have appeared from time to time in the past theories to the effect that art ought to be propagandizing, and one such theory is gaining currency today. Certainly much of what we call our greatest art, past and present, is propagandizing. Nearly all religious art is propagandizing, and that means most Byzantine, Gothic, and High Renaissance art. There is also a lot of good non-religious propagandizing art. Goya and Daumier were persistent propagandizers. So, at

the present moment, are the two great Mexicans. And to come to our own town, the first prize at this year's Annual was given to a frankly propagandizing picture.

On the other hand, an equally long list of great non-propagandizing pictures could be suggested. And the second prize at this year's Annual was given to a frankly non-propagandizing picture.

It does not look as if propaganda necessarily hurt art, nor does it look as if good art had to have it. The question seems to be whether such a good picture as John Howard's might not have been just as good without the propaganda.

Before we go further, suppose we ask, What is



propaganda? Propaganda appears to be an instrument of persuasion by means of which a person or group of persons induces other people to believe certain desired things or to act in certain desired ways. The stigma attaching to the term comes from the instrument being frequently employed in an unprincipled manner. The only legitimate mode of persuasion is that of valid reasoning from presented facts. Propaganda may be perfectly legitimate. But it is likely to be vicious. The propagandizing interests may have good ends in view, but be so anxious to put their ends over that they give way to the doctrine that the end justifies the means. Or, worst of all, the propagandizing interests may not believe in the ends at all, but use the means to make people do what they want. Vicious propagandizing is probably about as bad for art as for society. So let us keep the discussion within the bounds of legitimate propaganda.

By legitimate propaganda, I do not mean that the end sought is the best, but only that a case can be made out for it, and a man believing in it can be respected for his sincerity and his desire to play fair. Perhaps I had better say his *relative* desire to play fair. For intensity of belief which goes with a certain kind of sincerity can be respected up to a point even when it distorts the facts and the reasons in some degree. We must not feel that the propagandizer is distorting the facts with intent to deceive. We must feel only that the man's emotions are so strong that they color the facts. We can still respect a man's desire to persuade under these conditions. But when a man's intensity of belief reaches the point of fanaticism we are likely to lose touch with him, however sincere he may be. Sincerity does not justify all things.

Now, the way in which these remarks have to do with painting is that the basis of legitimate persuasion is a presentation of the relevant facts, and that there is no more vivid way of presenting a fact than to depict it in a picture. The vivid depiction of a fact suggesting a belief is what constitutes a propagandizing picture. The spectator is invited to make certain obvious inferences. Or he is emotionally stirred by the representation to indignation, horror, pity and drawn to the relevant belief. Or even more intimately, he may be brought into emotional sympathy with the artist by the very intensity of the painting, and in this manner drawn toward the relevant belief.

We see at once, I think, where the danger of propaganda lies for art. If a picture does straightway lead out of itself to a chain of reasoning or to external beliefs, then it ceases to be seen as a picture. At the extreme, a cross or a red flag or anything else emotionally symbolic in this purely centrifugal manner would do as well. However one defines the aesthetic value of a

(Concluded on page 4, column 2)

## A Personal Matter

By JOHN EMMETT GERRITY

We are so close to the art-school mind that we tend to lose sight of the fact that a painter should be able to paint, that is to say, adequately express himself. We fall into the unfortunate position of dwelling, in our appraisals, on relatively inconsequential technical points, and of ignoring the more profound motivations. The resultant confusion is far-reaching. Contemporary painting is shot through with reiteration, rearrangement and variation based on the products of others. What is basically true (in the psychological sense) for one painter, however important currently or historically, is precluded by natural conditioning, race, philosophy, religion, environment, from being true for another. Active defense mechanism uses as pigeon holes impressionism, surrealism and so on to cover the psychological inadequacy of the painter in the matter of self-examination.

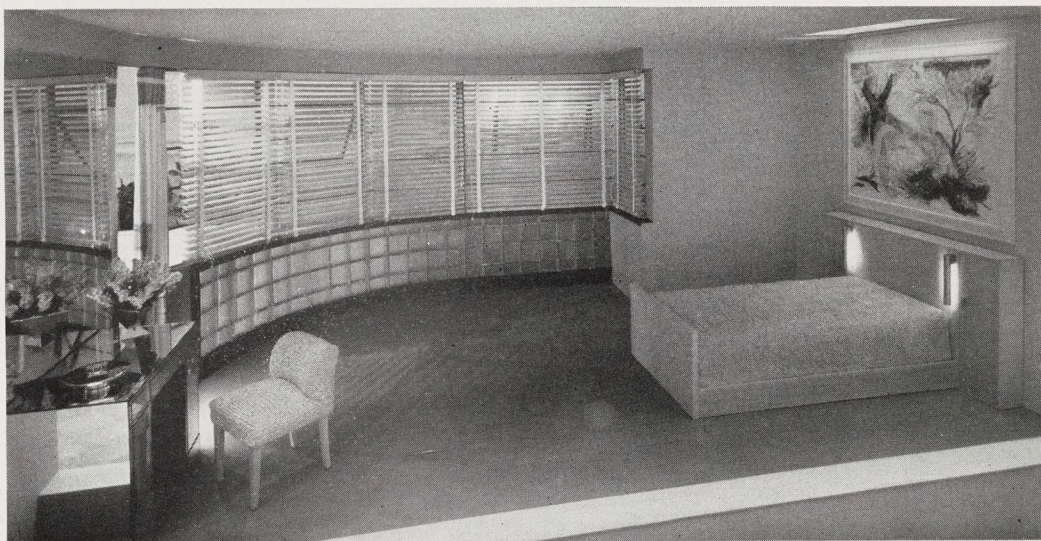
The intuitive impulse that determines the psychological structure of painting, often, through inadequate orientation in formative years, becomes submerged, and the mechanism atrophied. Conditioned by educational methods ignoring psychological facts which will be common knowledge in the next generation, the artist in many instances retains a servile attitude toward other minds. Judgment and choice resulting from impregnation of superficial exterior criticism sets up a mental habit finally causing permanent emasculation of the individual. The personal instinctive choice is impeded, and misplaced intellection substituted, an insidious process, leaving the artist aggressively unaware. We are not discussing conscious imitation.

There is a story concerning a young amateur composer. Spending months of leisure moments, he constructed an important-sounding piece for four stringed instruments, and after painstaking correction and re-decision reached something conclusive and true and original. An evening at the opera exposed the astonishing secret that he had succeeded in working out a part of "Il Pagliacci," a memory resting unconsciously in his mind since childhood.

The United States has been progressively conditioned as colonials. Our collective psyche, broadly speaking, is female. The British have sired our manners, customs and politics, for better or worse. The university lecturer points to the community of interest we share with English-speaking nations. In Russia we are offered a seductive political and philosophic rival to European whisperings. French commercial genius has captivated us in matters of art. Germany is *persona non grata*. There has been a spat. We are accepting gifts from Mexico. Like D. H. Lawrence's women, we yield to the stranger.

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BEDROOM—Henry T. Howard, architect. FURNITURE—James K. Mills. DRESSING TABLE—Grattan English.  
MURAL PAINTING—Jane Berlandina.  
Now showing San Francisco Museum of Art.

## San Francisco Museum of Art Shows Decorative Arts

The current Exhibition of Decorative Arts at the San Francisco Museum of Art illustrates the use of contemporary design principles in articles of use that are actually available through commercial sources.

Local craft work, which has several active outlets in the city, finds its place in the display by the generosity of firms which specialize in this field, and sets a high standard of excellence which is no surprise to those familiar with the work of artists and designers of this community. The manufactured articles, like most of the furniture, much of the ceramics, glassware and metal work, designed for large-scale production, have been chosen to show what has been accomplished up to the present in designing soundly for contemporary living according to the resources and suitability of materials, old and new. Color is an important contemporary interest and much use has been made of it.

The exhibition has a two-fold purpose. First, it is planned to allow the public, by the studying of good examples of the contemporary style, to learn to understand and appreciate its characteristics and qualities. Second, it is organized to enable artists and designers to seize at a glance what has been accomplished so far by those of their fellow artists, designers and craftsmen who have penetrated the industrial field or succeeded in finding a commercial outlet for their work, and the extent to which manufacturers have profited by the vital elements of our contemporary style.

We are new in this style and much remains to be done to evolve as coherent and beautiful

an impression of our living today as were the chairs of Chippendale or the Sevres porcelains of their respective times and cultures. In this evolution the artist, designer and craftsman must lead, but they need an understanding and sympathetic public to receive and appreciate their work. This Decorative Arts Exhibition has been planned to this end.

G. McC. M.

## Art Association Indorses New Memberships

Two new memberships have been added to the San Francisco Art Association—a "General Membership" at \$10 a year, and a "Children's Membership" at \$1 per annum.

The General Membership is the Association's response to a growing demand from interested persons who have been barred from joining the Art Association under the higher brackets.

The Children's Membership will embrace all children of school age. They will have the privilege of monthly lectures and gallery tours at the Museum and will receive the Art Association Bulletin.

In encouraging the children to frequent the Museum and in helping to develop their appreciation and knowledge of art, the Art Association is taking the lead in a policy which will undoubtedly be far-reaching and highly constructive. The nominal fee of \$1 per year is being maintained so that all children may avail themselves of this splendid opportunity.

"String Quartette," by David Park, recently awarded the Second Anne Bremer Memorial Prize, has been purchased by Sidney Coe Howard.



## San Francisco Art Association Bulletin

*Published Monthly by The San Francisco Art Association*  
*Bulletin Editor*.....MILDRED ROSENTHAL  
*Associates*.....RALPH STACKPOLE, WILLIAM HESTHAL  
RAY BOYNTON, MARIAN HARTWELL  
*Business Manager*.....PLATT KENT

Send material for Bulletin to San Francisco Art Association,  
Chestnut and Jones Streets, by 20th of each month.

There has been a number of requests from Eastern museums for early issues of the Bulletin. Members who possess old copies that they can spare will please send them to Dr. Morley, San Francisco Museum of Art.

### Attention, Artist Members

In submitting names of artists for membership in the San Francisco Art Association, please bear in mind the new regulations of admissions.

For the purpose of broadening the policy concerning the admission of artist members, the Artist membership has been divided into Associate Artist Membership and Active Artist Membership.

**Associate Artists:** All persons seriously working in the field of Art, who are sponsored by two artist members of the San Francisco Art Association and who fill out an admissions blank (obtainable at the offices of the S. F. A. A.) stating where they have studied, exhibited, etc., are eligible for Associate Artist Membership. They may become Active Artist Members when they have exhibited at three Annuals of the San Francisco Art Association or upon exhibiting a comprehensive group of work at any one Annual of the San Francisco Art Association.

**Active Artists:** Artists who have already exhibited three times with the San Francisco Art Association, or who have received prizes at the San Francisco Art Association Annuals, or who, as recognized exhibiting artists, are sponsored by the Artists' Council, are eligible for Active Artist Membership.

Privileges and dues for Associate Artist and Active Artist Memberships are the same, except that only Active Artist members may be given the responsibility of voting, or of serving on juries or on the Artists' Council.

**NOTE:** The Board of Directors has approved the recommendation of the Artists' Council that one-half of the dues collected from Artist members (Associate or Active) will be turned over to the Artists' Fund. This fund is controlled by the Artists' Council, for the purpose of furthering and developing the art and artists of the San Francisco Art Association.

The five programs of early motion picture films previously shown at the San Francisco Museum of Art are being repeated on Tuesday evenings.

## Auction Sponsored by Artists

An exhibition and sale of work by artist members of the San Francisco Art Association will be held at the School of Fine Arts and will open with a tea on April 17th from 4 to 6 o'clock.

Drawings, paintings and small sculpture ranging in prices within \$50 will be offered for sale, the proceeds to be turned over to the recently developed Artists' Fund. The exhibition will remain on view until the evening of April 24th, when an auction, with Lucien Labaudt as auctioneer, will be held. Labaudt will be ably assisted by a capable staff who will at one and the same time find owners for the works of art and fill the coffers of the Artists' Fund. Refreshments will be served and all members and friends of the Art Association are invited to attend.

### Propagandizing Art

(Continued from page 2)

picture (unless one thinks there is no such value, but only practical values), that value must lead back into the picture—the picture, of course, being, like a poem or a piece of music, much more than marks on a plane surface. The value must be such as to prolong contemplation.

But, having reached this conclusion, we are not justified in leaping to the opposite conclusion, as Roger Fry does, that only plastic values are intrinsic to art. Plastic values certainly do stay inside of a picture. But so may other values. And the surprising thing is that even propagandic values may be kept inside of a picture if they are handled with care and restraint. The principal agent for holding propagandic values in a picture is, to be sure, the plastic values. But, again, that does not mean that the plastic values are the only aesthetic ones. The plastic values themselves become saturated and enriched by the social values they incorporate, and thereby become aesthetically much more than just plastic values.

There is, consequently, some truth in the contention of exponents of propagandizing art, such as Tolstoy, that art without social reference is trivial, and empty, and lacking in depth. But Tolstoy is clearly as much taken in by a half truth as Roger Fry.

Propaganda is definitely, therefore, a source of danger to an artist. If an artist becomes nothing but a social reformer he is an artist in name only. Thus his intensity of human sympathy may ruin him. On the other hand, in the practice of some men who have the power and the restraint to hold their propaganda inside the picture, so that the values flow into the picture and not out of it, social comment may increase the beauty of their work. As regards John Howard's "Embarcadero," I think this is the case. I think the picture is enhanced in beauty by the social comment it contains.



## Architectural Ethic

(Excerpts from San Francisco Chronicle)

By IRVING F. MORROW

With economics imposing caution, not to say timidity, the designer who is responsive to the changing cultural complex faces a baffling situation. How is he to achieve the progressive adjustments—call them experiments if you like—by which alone stagnation is to be avoided?

. . . Almost the only spacious opportunity offered by modern life which is above this petty prudence is the large exposition. For here there need be no worry over whether it will sell, or whether the style is going to last, or whether it conforms to neighboring buildings, or any of the other anxieties that bother practical people about permanent structures. An exposition is deliberately designed to be transitory. From these secondary economic inhibitions it is free.

What bearing should this almost unique situation have on the architecture of an exposition?

. . . Thinking people justify an exposition as an opportunity to exploit and take stock of the cultural resources of the community. To architecture this means liberation of the creative impulses which in ordinary life are perforce warped or thwarted by practical considerations. Expositions become society's architectural experiment stations. It should be useless to conduct at them elaborate and costly demonstrations of what we already know. *It is difficult to see how a community not resigned to artistic impotence could countenance an architecturally retrospective exhibition.*

So much for the general spirit of architecture in such an enterprise. If this architecture is to be really a solicitous mother rather than an indifferent stepmother to the other arts, it has more specific obligations to meet. . . .

Collaboration between the plastic arts is one of those proprieties which are unfailingly indorsed and rarely tried. . . .

For this state of affairs there has been divided responsibility. Artists on their part have not infrequently imposed immoderate prices and conditions for descents from the ivory tower. Architects, on the other hand, have been too commonly untrained in the allied arts, indifferent to their possible contribution, insensitive to the essential nature and values of decoration, and (consciously or unconsciously) apprehensive, even jealous of the intervention of first rate creative talents on their work.

Take this explanation, or produce one you like better, the fact remains that in recent times, in important architectural work, there have been few instances of the employment of significant sculptors and painters under conditions affording reasonable scope for the creative contributions they were prepared to offer.

## A Personal Matter

(Continued from page 2)

Our educational system was summed up by a British writer as aiming to have us live peacefully with one another, so that we will not kill each other off. The implications in this expression of our desire for complacency when considered in regard to the mental realm are not amusing. We see the danger in mass education to the individual personality. A Kiwanian never shoots a brother member. Possibly there is a sub-conscious desire to do so that right education would allow to be satisfied. But in the highly particularized field of art, where psychic rectitude has such enormous value, mass imposition of ideas unaccountable to the individual has more disastrous results to art in general, relatively, than fratricidal joiners.

It has been explained that we have grown up too quickly to have a serious look at ourselves. The individual has had little incentive for the consideration of himself as a particular being. The process of delving past superficial education, training and habit into the depths of our psychic inheritance, race memory and our innermost mental life, is considered work for specialists. These are the forces that produce us, and are there to be explored and used as fundamental material upon which the artist must build. Some are instinctively so rooted. Training, for the most part, has impeded the healthy development of the individual, who seeks unconsciously adjustment and compromise to offset the lack intuitively felt.

Hence we have followers of schools, or imitators of dominating figures. We see sound, solid individuals with fine background, living peacefully and sanely, producing works that have obviously no relation to their life and psyche—paintings that could be expected from a neurotically sensitive painter in the midst of the German upheaval. Rivera passed through and left in his wake many followers who have adopted his political tone, primitive arrangement and technique, and who produce paintings that belong in Mexico, where the culture that produced them obtains. The French schools are still the most imitated, and Germany is always well represented in our exhibitions.

Some painters, astonishingly versatile, take them all in stride, successfully exhibiting Klee, Jawlensky, Bracque, Derain, Chirico, the Eastern Americans, and so on.

In an exhibition of local artists recently one could see, for example, insecure Hoffmans, various French flower studies, Burchfield house fronts, Orozcos, Riveras, Renoirs, etc., which only the adept could appreciate.



# SAN FRANCISCO ART ASSOCIATION BULLETIN

SECTION 562, P. L. & R.  
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## April Exhibitions in Local Galleries

*The Art Center*, 730 Montgomery Street: Water-colors by Douglas Kingman, April 1st to April 15th. Drawings by Edloe Risling, April 1st to April 15th. Oils and drawings by Phyllis de Lappe.

*Amberg-Hirth*, 165 Post Street: New jewelry by Margaret de Patta. Block printed luncheon sets by James Keenan.

*M. H. de Young Memorial Museum*, Golden Gate Park: Persian textiles and Persian color prints, April 15th to May 4th. Elementary School Creative Art, April 15th to May 14th.

*The Paul Elder Gallery*, 239 Post Street. Water-colors and drawings by Julian Williams, from March 2nd to March 21st. Lithographs and original drawings by Nura, from March 23rd to April 11th. Water-colors, drawings and gouaches by Henri Bowden, from April 13th to May 2nd.

*Women's City Club*: Work of the pupils of the Elementary Grades of the San Francisco Public Schools.

*S. and G. Gump*, 246 Post Street: Joint exhibition of drawings and oils by Eula Long and Brooke Waring, from March 23rd to April 4th. Water-colors by Maurice Logan, from April 6th to April 18th. Exhibition of fine specimens of Lalique Glass, from April 13th to April 27th.

Exhibition of reproductions of paintings by Van Gogh, from April 22nd to May 20th.

*University of California*, Museum Building: 20th Century French Painting Loan Collection from private sources.

*The Los Angeles Art Association*: First National Exhibition of historic and contemporary cartoons and caricatures, Art Gallery of the Public Library, Los Angeles, through April 30th.

### San Francisco Museum of Art

*Decorative Arts Exhibition*: Through April 30th.

*Exhibition of Works by Ernest Fiene*: Through April 30th.

*Peruvian Paintings by Julia Codesido*: Through April 30th.

*Color Reproductions of Paintings by Van Gogh*: Through April 30th.

*Prints, Drawings and Paintings by Picasso*: Through April 20th.

*Paintings by Georges Braque*: Through April 20th.

*Annual Exhibition of the Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain*: Through April 10th.

### EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

Monday evenings, except April 12th: Early Movies, at 8:00 p. m.

Tuesday evenings: Furniture and Decorative Arts, at 7:00 p. m.

Wednesday evenings: Public Lectures on Van Gogh, at 8:00 p. m.

Thursday evenings: Study of Prints, at 8:00 p. m.

Sunday afternoons: Public Lectures on Current Exhibitions, at 3:00 p. m.